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## ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

Internal Developments in North Korea

FROM: R. W. Manners  
Director, Foreign Broadcast  
Information Service

EXTENSION

NO.

FBIS-0042-88

DATE

4 March 1988

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SUBJECT: INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH KOREA (U)

A. SSO USFK 240402Z FEB 88

B. FBIS RESTON VA 260847Z FEB 88

1. (U) REF A CONTAINED AN ANALYSIS OF NKOREA'S MEDIA TREATMENT OF THIS YEAR'S OBSERVATION OF KIM JONG-IL'S (KJI) BIRTHDAY (16 FEB) WHICH NOTED THAT THERE WERE MARKED QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCES AS COMPARED TO LAST YEAR'S FESTIVITIES AND POSITED THAT KJI'S ALLEGED COMPLICITY IN THE FATAL BOMBING OF KOREAN AIRLINES

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FLIGHT 858 LAST NOVEMBER MIGHT HAVE CAUSED BOTH THE REGIME AND MANY OF ITS EXTERNAL SUPPORTERS TO BE LESS PUBLICLY FULSOME THAN USUAL IN PRAISE OF "DEAR LEADER." REF B NOTED RECENT INDICATIONS, INCLUDING THE REPLACEMENT OF THE KOREAN PEOPLES ARMY (KPA) CHIEF OF STAFF (O KUK-YOL, A KNOWN KJI LOYALIST) BY ONE OF THE LAST REMAINING ANTI-JAPANESE RESISTANCE FIGHTERS WHO PRESUMABLY IS CLOSELY TIED TO KIM IL-SUNG, THAT THERE MAY BE A LEADERSHIP DEBATE UNDERWAY IN HYONGYANG.

2. (S/NF) ALTHOUGH THE SIGNIFICANCE IS BY NO MEANS CLEAR, THERE IS SUFFICIENT EVIDENCE EMANATING FROM NK HRESENTLY TO SUGGEST THAT IMPORTANT CHANGES -- IN PERSONNEL OR EXTERNAL STRATEGY, OR BOTH -- HOSSIBLY ARE IN PROGRESS OR IMPENDING. THE APPARENT DEEMPHASIS ON KJI'S BIRTHDAY, THE FACT THAT HE HAS NOT BEEN SEEN IN PUBLIC (INCLUDING NK TELEVISION) FOR OVER 2 MONTHS, THE REMOVAL OF O KUK-YOL AS KPA CHIEF OF STAFF AND THE APPOINTMENT OF CHOE KWANG, THE POSSIBLE REPLACEMENT OF TWO ECONOMIC SECTOR OFFICIALS THOUGHT TO BE ALIGNED WITH KJI, AND THE REHORTED NK PLANS TO CLOSE 8 OF ITS EMBASSIES AND REDUCE KOREAN WORKER PARTY STAFF, COLLECTIVELY IMPLY THAT IT IS NOT BUSINESS AS USUAL IN PYONGYANG THESE DAYS.

3. (U) IT IS WORTH BEARING IN MIND, ALSO, THAT, CUMULATIVELY, THE

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LAST 14 MONTHS HAVE NOT BEEN A PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL PERIOD IN NK'S SHORT, ERRATIC HISTORY. KIM IL-SUNG'S HEAVILY PROPAGANDIZED PARLIAMENTARY TALKS PROPOSAL, FIRST AIRED IN HIS 31 DEC 86 SPEECH TO THE SUPREME PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, BECAME MIRED IN A SERIES OF UNACCEPTABLE HOKG COUNTERPROPOSALS AND EVENTUALLY FADE# AWAY; THE SPRING STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS FOLLOWING THEN-PRESIDENT CHUN'S DECISION TO SUSPEND ROK CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION CULMINATING IN THE SO-CALLED "JUNE STRUGGLE" WHEN HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF ROK CITIZENS TOOK TO THE STREETS, WHICH LOOKED SO HOPEFUL (FROM AN NK PERSPECTIVES, QUICKLY DISSAPATED WHEN THE RULING PARTY'S PRESIDENTIAL CANIIDATE EXPOUNDED HIS 8-POINT PLAN FOR DEMOCRATIZATION; CHUN'S REVERIAL OF HIS EARLIER DECISION FACILITATED THE ROK PEOPLE'S OVERWHELMING ENDORSEMENT BY REFERENEUM OF A REVISED CONSTITUTION; ITS OWN SUMMER "DISARMAMENT" PROHOSAL PROVED IMPOTENT; AND, FINALLY, NO TAE-U'S ULTIMATE VICTORY IN THE DECEMBER ELECTIONS, ENDED A YEAR OF FAILED ATTEMPTS DIRECTLY TO INFLUENCE THE ROK SOCIO-POLITICAL SITUATION. THIS WAS OVERLAID WITH PYONGYANG'S APPARENT LOSS OF THE PROPAGANDA WAR WAGED OVER THE NORTH'S CONSTRUCTION OF THE KUMGANGSAN 9AM, ITS EMBARRASSING DEFAULT ON REPAYMENT OF INTERNATIONAL DEBTS, AND BY THE REFUSAL OF NEARLY ALL

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OF ITS "FRIENDS" TO SUPPORT ITS DEMANDS FOR A SOCIALIST BOYCOTT OF A NON-CO-HOSTED 1988 OLYMHICS. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COUP DE GRACE, OF COURSE, CAME WITH KIM HYUN-HUI'S TELEVISED CONFESSION ON 15 JAN 88 TO BEING ONE OF THE NK AGENTS RESPONSIBLE, ON THE PERSONAL ORDERS OF KIM JONG-IL, FOR BLOWING KAL 858 OUT OF THE SKY, A CHARGE WHICH HAS ELICITED NEARLY UNIVERSAL CONDEMNATION FROM NON-COMMUNIST STATES AND MOSTLY AGONIZED SILENCE FROM THOSE WHO NORMALLY ARE QUICK TO ENDORSE OR ACQUIESCE IN THE NK LINE. IN SUM, AN INGLORIOUS, FRUSTRATING YEAR.

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4. (S/NF) GIVEN THE FOREGOING, IT SEEMS NOT UNREASONABLE THAT AT LEAST INTERNAL DEBATE, IF NOT THE PURGE OF FACTIONALLY AFFILIATED INDIVIDUALS, IS UNDERWAY WITHIN THE NK. POLITICAL ELITE. (IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT ROK INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES DO NOT SEE ANY CHANGE IN KJI'S STATUS RESULTING FROM KAL OR O KUK-YOL'S REMOVAL. IN FACT, PREVAILING LOCAL OPINION IS THAT O WILL BE INSTALLED IN AN EVEN MORE IMPORTANT POSITION, PERHAPS AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF PREPARING FOR KJI'S SUCCESSION. IN THIS VIEW, CHOE KWANG, WHO IS CREDITED WITH BEING A GOOD ADMINISTRATOR AND DISCIPLINARIAN WITH DOCUMENTED TIES TO BOTH KIM'S, HAS BEEN BROUGHT IN TO STREAMLINE AND MAKE MORE EFFICIENT A KPA STAFF THAT MAY HAVE BECOME ADMINISTRATIVELY SLIPSHOD

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DURING O'S TENURE.) OF ANALYTICAL RELEVANCE, ALSO, IS THE FACT THAT KIM IL-SUNG'S PERSONALITY CULT, WHICH HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO KJI AS CROWN PRINCE, DOES NOT ADMIT OF ANY CRITICISM, NO MATTER WHAT EITHER OF THEM MIGHT HAVE DONE. THUS, EVEN IF KJI WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE KAL BOMBING, BY THE LOGIC OF ITS OWN SYSTEM HE COULD NOT BE TOUCHED WITHOUT UPSETTING NOT ONLY THE SUCCESSION PROCESS BUT ALSO ALL THE IDEOLOGICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF THE STATE.

5. (S/NF) FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, THE PRESENT NK INTERNAL SITUATION IS AMBIGUOUS, ANOMALOUS AND, TO THE EXTENT THAT THE OUTCOME IS UNPREDICTABLE, POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS. WE ARE CONTINUING, WITH OUR ROK ALLIES, TO EXAMINE THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE VERY CAREFULLY, PARTICULARLY AS IT MIGHT PORTEND A CHANGE IN THE SECURITY SITUATION ON THE PENINSULA. WE ALSO ARE KEEPING A WEATHER EYE OUT FOR ANY POSSIBILITIES TO INFLUENCE THE SITUATION TO ROK/US ADVANTAGE.

6. (S/NF) THE US AMBASSADOR TO THE ROK ALREADY HAS PROPOSED TO DOS THAT THE "COMMUNITY OF CONCERNED AGENCIES IN WASHINGTON" TAKE A HARD LOOK AT NK INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS ON A PRIORITY BASIS. WE ENDORSE THAT SUGGESTION AND ASK ADDRESSEES TO HELP US UNDERSTAND CURRENT EVENTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE BY FOCUSING ANALYTICAL

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ATTENTION ON THIS MOST CHALLENGING PROBLEM.

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